

# Ministering to Those Struggling with Fear

April 29, 2021

Welcome & Prayer Pastor Adam

Defining / Identifying / Understanding Fear Lesley

**Intro:** Why do we need to get equipped in this area?

- Fear is one of the top issues that counselors check on their intake sheet when they come to us for counseling.
- Overall, especially over the last year and a half, there is a culture of fear.

## *Defining Fear*

Anxiety - worrying (literally, a 'divided mind') about something that **could possibly happen**.

Fear - goes a step further and is more **convinced** that what is dreaded **will really happen**.

- Anxiety and fear are like "kissing cousins". Not identical, but are very closely related.
- Concern (worry/anxiety) and fear are NOT always wrong.
- Both are used in Scripture to refer to right and wrong responses.

So what is the difference between right and wrong worry/concern and fear?

## **Godly concern**

- Caring about important things for the right reasons.
- Trust in God's ultimate control and in His faithfulness.
- Helps you to be responsible to God and does not send you into a confused state.
- Focus will be on the *responsibilities of today, eternal goals, and others*.
- Focused on what is true and helpful from God's perspective.

## **Ungodly concern (anxiety)**

- Is beyond reasonable concern and worries about mere possibilities.
- Helps you to be responsible to God and does not send you into a confused state.
- Focused on *difficulties of the future, temporal matters, and self*.
- Ungodly concern/anxiety is not focused on God nor on what is true and helpful.

## **Godly fear has two parts**

### 1. Fear of God

- We're all commanded to fear/revere God. (Deuteronomy 13:4)
- Acknowledgement of and an awe of WHO God is.
- This kind of proper fear is holy, wise, and keeps us from ungodly fear.

### 2. Reasonable fear of danger and difficulty

- We are equipped with a bodily response to danger or difficulty.
  - When physical danger is imminent some of these bodily responses are: heart pounding, muscles tense up, have a heightened awareness, etc.
- We're to live in the reality of this BUT we are to bring Him into the picture/situation.
- "As long as we do not let our fear or our feelings keep us from doing what is right, and we turn to God in our fear, that fear is not ungodly."
- Don't equate courage with lack of feeling afraid.

- The question is . . . “What do we do when we are afraid?”

### **Ungodly fear**

1. There is a fear we are commanded to not have
  - Isaiah 41:10 “Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”
  - John 14:27 “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.”
2. This kind of fear is “an intimidating and often paralyzing fear.”
3. It takes many forms
4. Ungodly fear ceases to focus on God and others and instead focuses on SELF
  - To give in to ungodly fear is to call God a liar. (*Numbers 3:19*)
    - He’s promised to never leave or forsake us.
    - He’s promised to provide a way out of temptation.
    - He’s given us His peace.
5. “Any time we fail to do what we should do just because we are afraid fo what might happen to us, we’re being fearful in an ungodly way.” (Parable of the Talents, *Matthew 25:14-26*)
6. Ungodly fear displeases God when we become convinced that something dreadful is going to happen and we have no basis or proof that it will happen this way.

### **Identifying Fear**

Fear is a biblical word we can work with, but the labels that the world give it make it seem as though it is not something we can help a member of our Life Group or a counselee with.

#### **For example**

1. Strong fear would include things like:
  - Panic attacks
  - Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder OCD
  - Post-traumatic Stress Disorder PTSD
2. Milder fear would include things like:
  - General Anxiety Disorder GAD
  - Social Anxiety Disorder SAD
  - Phobias

### **Understanding Fear**

What are some things we need to know and keep in mind about fear?

- It is perceived danger
- That ‘danger’ physically energizes us to either a “Flight” or “Fight” response
- It is asking *What if?* because to the person, “The future holds potential loss.”
- Ungodly fear is focused on circumstances and SELF
- Fear is directly related to what we are thinking
- When someone is engaged in ungodly fear, they are fearing something else more than they fear God.

#### **What else does fear do?**

1. It motivates us towards a few things
  - “Fear motivates us to seek **safety, control, and certainty.**”
  - “All three of these are good and right things to seek in the face of danger. However, all three can go badly in a hurry.”

- Depending on the fearful circumstance/situation, some will “grasp at safety, control, and certainty at all costs.”
- “Anything pursued at all costs will ultimately cost more than you can afford.”

All three of these methods “present a frightfully strong temptation to trust in ourselves rather than in God.”

2. Fear communicates what is important to us. In *Untangling Emotions*, Groves & Smith write:
  - “Fear whether mild uneasiness or object terror, has a simple message: *something you value is under threat.*”
  - Keep in mind that, “Many fears are rooted in valid concerns for valid loves.”
  - Safety, control, and certainty are not bad . . . God’s Word does speak to these areas. But, “in this fractured (sinful world/life), we will never be completely safe, fully in control, or 100% certain of what is coming next.”
  - “Dangers, dependence, and uncertainties are signposts that point us not to a strategy but to a Person: the One whose control and utterly certain character are our only real safety.”
  - When the desire to be safe through maintaining control and certainty, we (or our counselee/Life Group member) implicitly accuse God of not having our best interests in mind.”

*“ Where fear flourishes, there your heart will also be.”*

### ***Ministering to the Fear-filled Counselee***

1. Gather good data
  - You want them to examine and evaluate what they are fearing.
  - All of the resources at the end of this section have questions that can help you gather data.
2. Some practical suggestions you can give to the fear-filled person are:
  - Get your breathing under control
  - Exercise
  - Rest well
  - Choose to not procrastinate nor choose not to be overactive
  - Seek out and seize the opportunities to face your fears
  - Go on the offensive against any area in your life where you are self-medicating
3. Areas to help the fear-filled person transform
  - Be sure their salvation is settled and they know how to repent of any other known sin. (*Psalm 32:5; 1 John 5:10-13*)
  - Study God’s sovereignty (*Isaiah 46:9-11; life of Joseph in Genesis 50; Jeremiah 32:27; Romans 8:28*)
  - Study on God’s presence and care. (*Joshua 1:9; Psalm 27:1-14; Psalm 23, especially v. 4*)
  - Study God’s sufficient grace (help) in times of trouble. (*Isaiah 41:10; 2 Corinthians 12:9; Hebrews 4:16*)
  - Learn / study the proper “fear” of God. (*Deuteronomy 10:12, 20; Psalm 119:2*)
  - Teach them how to be alert, be ready to use self-control, and how to do battle with their thoughts. (*1 Peter 1:13*)
4. Help them to increase proper fear - the Fear of God
 

“Nothing so powerfully quinces the fire of fear as the presence of someone we trust.”

In the book, *What does it mean to Fear the Lord?*, author Michael Reeves says:

  - “Our culture has lost God at the project object of fear.”
  - “The loss of the fear of God is what ushered in our age of anxiety, but the fear of God is the very antidote to our fretfulness.”
5. Look at Psalm 27

## ***Resources Used***

*Untangling Emotions* by J. Alasdair Groves & Winston T. Smith

*Anger, Anxiety and Fear* by Stuart Scott

*Breaking Free from Fear* by Kay Arthur (6-week, 40-minute Study)

*Anxiety and Panic Attacks: Trusting God When You're Afraid* by Jocelyn Wallace

*What Does it Mean to Fear the Lord?* By Michael Reeves

*The Fear Factor: What Satan Doesn't Want You to Know* by Wayne & Joshua Mack

*Attributes of God* by Brad Hambrick

# Thinking / Emotions / Action Chris

What might people fear?

- Fear of losing job, fearing of losing loved ones, fear of death, fear of the unknown, fear of men, fear of pain, fear of rejection, fear of loneliness.

## Definition of Fear

### Noun *fear*

**1a:** an unpleasant often strong emotion caused by anticipation or awareness of danger.

**1b (1):** an instance of this emotion; **(2)** a state marked by this emotion

**2:** anxious concern : SOLICITUDE

**3:** profound reverence and awe especially toward God

**4:** reason for alarm : DANGER

### Verb *feared; fearing; fears*

**1:** to be afraid of: expect with alarm fear the worst.

**2:** to have a reverential awe of fear God

- By Chris' count, 411 verses contain Fear or with fear as the root word (i.e. feared, fearfully), so the concept of fear must be rather important.

Psalm 139:14

<sup>14</sup> I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

- Fearfully made? Yes, we are fearfully made worship and, thus, fear the LORD. And that fear that is created in us to give a profound reverence and awe toward God, can be misdirected and misguided when we let our flesh takes control and directs our thoughts to fear something else.
- Instead, we need to take every thought captive before the LORD.  
*2 Corinthians 10:3-5* <sup>3</sup> For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. <sup>4</sup> The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. <sup>5</sup> We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.
- As pastor and author Brad Bigney states, "We do what we do because we want what we want, and we want what we want because we think what we think."
- Therefore, we need to change our thoughts by focusing and relying on the strength given by the Holy Spirit.

## T.E.A. (Thinking, Emoting, Acting)

### Thinking

- We need to take every thought captive before the LORD.
- We need to be alert when we begin thinking thoughts that are fleshly.  
It was once said to me, "We are not responsible for our first thought; but, we are responsible for our 2<sup>nd</sup> thought and our first action."

- By refocusing our thoughts on the Lord, we are guarding our hearts and retraining our brains how to think about the problems we face in life.

Proverbs 4:23 <sup>23</sup> *Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.*

### ***Emoting/Emotions***

- Our emotions follow our thinking.
- The wrong way to look at things is that we feel certain ways, then we think certain ways. But we should not follow our feelings. We need to follow right thinking.
- Fear is an emotion. The flames of fear are either fanned by our wrong thinking, or the flames of fear are doused with the Living Water found in Jesus Christ.

1 John 4:18 <sup>18</sup> *There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.*

We need to remember that we are loved by God. He loves us. Jesus took the wrath of God, so we need not to fear.

Matthew 6:25-27 *“Therefore I tell you, do not **worry** about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by **worrying** add a single hour to your life?”*

Philippians 4:7 *“And the **peace that surpasses all understanding** will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”*

John 16:33 *“I have told you these things, **so that in me you may have peace**. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*

Reflect on the promises of God. He loves us. He wants peace for us. He wants good for us. He has a plan for us.

Jeremiah 29:11, <sup>11</sup> ***For I know the plans I have for you,*** declares the Lord, ***plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.***

Romans 8:28 (NKJV) <sup>28</sup> *“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”*

### ***Acting/Actions***

- **What we speak of out loud to others is a form of action.**

Are we speaking of our lack of confidence in our perceived outcome of the situation (fear)?

Or are we speaking of our confidence in our Rock and our Fortress to help us withstand and overcome the situation?

Psalm 46:1-2, *“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. <sup>2</sup> Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,”*

Psalm 145:19-21, <sup>19</sup> *He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them. <sup>20</sup> The Lord watches over all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy. <sup>21</sup> My mouth will speak in praise of the Lord. Let every creature praise his holy name for ever and ever.”*

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NKJV), *“in everything **give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.**”*

- Job is a perfect example of the right acting by praising God despite the circumstances. He spent his days praying to, praising, and sacrificing to God. His thoughts (his thinking) was on God, and though he was grieved, his actions of his words praised God when he had lost everything.

Job 1:20-21 (NKJV), “<sup>20</sup> Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and **he fell to the ground and worshiped.**<sup>21</sup> And he said: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, And naked shall I return there. **The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord.**”

- Another form of action is the fruits of the Spirit in how we conduct our daily lives. The thing is it is not up to us to carry the burdens of every day with stress, anxiety and fear. We are to give up those fleshly thoughts, emotions, and actions of darkness and put on the armor of God.

Romans 13:12, “*The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and **put on the armor of light.***”

Galatians 5:16-25 (NLT), “*So I say, **let the Holy Spirit guide your lives.** Then you won’t be doing what your sinful nature craves. <sup>17</sup> The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions. <sup>18</sup> But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the law of Moses. <sup>19</sup> When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, <sup>21</sup> envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God. <sup>22</sup> But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, and self-control.** There is no law against these things! <sup>24</sup> Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. <sup>25</sup> Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit’s leading in every part of our lives.”*

Ephesians 6:10-19, “*Finally, **be strong in the Lord** and in his mighty power. <sup>11</sup> Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. <sup>12</sup> **For our struggle is not against flesh and blood,** but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. <sup>13</sup> **Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground,** and after you have done everything, to stand. <sup>14</sup> Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, <sup>15</sup> and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the **gospel of peace.** <sup>16</sup> In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup> Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. <sup>18</sup> And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people. <sup>19</sup> Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that **I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel**”*

- What action are we ultimately called to do? To share the Good News of Jesus Christ. (Not to focus on our fears or to only share the Good News when we feel safe and secure.) We need to practice the action of speaking about Jesus.

Matthew 28:19-20, “*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*”

## **Conclusion**

If we change our thinking from fear of the dire circumstances and possible outcomes of situations to confidence in the LORD’s provision and protection, our emotions will change from fear ridden to ridden of fear. And our actions will change from speaking of the situation to speaking the Good News of Jesus. And when this storm blows over and God has once again proven Himself to be faithful, we can add this to our testimony as we witness to others the goodness of God and the hope of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.